

The District 3 Slate

March 2001

County Supervisor Pam Slater

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-- Supervisor Pam Slater



County Supervisor
Pam Slater

Dear friends:

Spring has arrived in San Diego, bringing with it warmer temperatures and longer days.

Traditionally, the sounds of spring are heralded by the songs of birds, and this edition of *The District 3 Slate* contains some fun news about how you can learn more about the birds that visit San Diego in springtime.

One of the stories in this newsletter will tell you all about "*Bird Hub*," a new, whimsical public art exhibit at the San Elijo Lagoon. I hope you get a chance to go and see it.

Obviously, a bird's ability to fly makes it easier for them to get around in San Diego.

But I hope you'll read my commentary on the back page, in which I discuss some ways that we can improve our ability to get around on San Diego's roads and freeways. As always, I welcome your comments and questions.

Pam Slater

No delays at this hub: San Elijo's avian airport

But where's the baggage claim?

Supporters of the San Elijo Lagoon in Encinitas recently gathered for the opening of "*Bird Hub*," a new public art exhibit at the lagoon. The exhibit attracts visitors to the lagoon and helps educate them about flight patterns used by birds at the lagoon.



Imagine a picturesque local lagoon as an airport for birds, a place where they arrive, converge and depart as frequently as airplanes at Chicago's O'Hare.

Two years ago, an artist named Daniel Wheeler visited San Elijo Lagoon in Encinitas and came away with a vision of this avian airport.

His three-component art project began its two-year exhibition this March at the lagoon.

"It was an honor to be present at the opening of "*Bird Hub*," said County Supervisor Pam Slater.

"Even while I was speaking at

the opening, I believe the snowy egrets were coming in for a landing, and the cormorants were preparing to take off."

Two parts of Wheeler's art exhibit will be displayed at the coastal wetlands.

Chalkboards will be frequently updated with avian arrivals and departures. The chalkboards contain categories as "Purpose of Trip" with light-hearted explanations such as "to breed" or "migratory rest stop."

Another part of the exhibit features a 15-foot observation pole with binoculars provided for both human- and bird's-eye views, topped with a windsock to indicate wind direction.

"Although the birds are unlikely to use the binoculars, the artist here makes a whimsical point about the different vantage points we have vs. the birds," Slater said.

The third component of Wheeler's art exhibit is an eight-foot human perch placed at nearby MiraCosta College.

Noted Slater: "We're confident this avian airport will be able to completely meet all of the state's environmental laws."



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Commentary:

Slater urges public vote on *TransNet* funding

For many people, San Diego County is becoming a traffic logjam rivaling Los Angeles. Almost one million more vehicles will be registered here by the year 2020. Meanwhile, highway capacity has only grown by 5.7 percent. We simply do not have enough road capacity to accommodate all the cars.

Only two solutions will make a major impact: Invest more in freeways and major arterial roads, and provide an efficient mass transit system.

There is a system that could help. The Transit Works plan developed by the Metropolitan Transit Development Board (MTDB) highlights the idea of adding "Flex-Trolleys," which are sleek, high-tech, trolley-look vehicles on rubber wheels. They run on their own trackway, but can use designated lanes or existing streets.

The Transit Works plan maps out a network of Flex-Trolley routes to serve the region. With street improvements and new stations, the complete program will cost about \$7 billion. But there

isn't enough existing TransNet money - a ½ cent sales tax used for transportation - to pay for it. Since TransNet funds are accrued and distributed over two decades, it would take 20 years to build just a small portion of



the system. Therefore, this is not an immediate solution. We must act if we want solutions:

1.) Voters must support continuing TransNet for 2008 to 2028. This should be done now, before the current TransNet tax expires.

2.) TransNet will produce about \$3 billion in revenues from 2008 to 2028. If adopted,

a regional transportation agency could immediately bond against the revenues and provide the money up front for a regional Flex-Trolley system.

3.) The bulk of TransNet revenue must fund items with the biggest regional bang for the buck. The items must be listed on the ballot so the public knows where their tax dollars are being spent. Flex-Trolleys could be included.

Up front money of \$1 billion would buy 1,000 Flex-Trolleys. If the public votes to extend TransNet this November and bonding occurs the following year, a flex trolley system could be up and running in 2004.

Polls show that if the tax includes money for freeway improvements, while also funding open space and clean water to promote a balanced quality of life, it's more likely to pass.

It's time to create a committee to bring TransNet to the ballot to fund our transportation needs in 2008 to 2028. I plan to begin forming the committee now. We can't wait any longer.

Prevention is key to better county health

Potentially preventable diseases and injuries caused more San Diegans to die from 1997 to 1999 than from otherwise unavoidable causes, according to the state's annual County Health Status Profile.

For the nearly 19,000 local residents who died in each of the above years, the most common -- and largely preventable -- causes included heart disease, various types of cancer, firearm injuries, suicide, diabetes, motor vehicle accidents and drug-related deaths.

San Diego County has lower rates of infant deaths, low birth weight infants and births to teen mothers, all of which have improved markedly in the past 10 years. Also improved are the locate rates of AIDS and tuberculosis, each having decreased more than 40 percent since the early 1990s.

"It will take every one of us to reduce the level of preventable disease and injury in our community, so that the quality of life for everyone improves," said Supervisor Pam Slater.

"We're fortunate to have such cooperation among our health professionals, community groups and government on this."

County Supervisor Pam Slater
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